Diagram

Diagram.

Deleuze's Augmentation of a Topical Notion.

ABSTRACT.

The concept of the diagram, in its common understanding as a representational schema, has enjoyed renewed attention in recent years across the humanities and the social sciences, bolstered in part by the "spatial turn". In line with this trend recent writing within aesthetics, art theory and art history has enthusiastically embraced diagrammatics as a tool for analysis. These readings tend to incorporate the diagram within formalist and representational modes of analyses. In contrast, Deleuze presents us with a non-representational conception of the diagram that offers a way of thinking of the genesis of works of art as a 'being of sensation', the nature of art's thought as constructive, and the relation of art's work to art's history through the ontological foregrounding of 'difference'. In this paper, I set out these two contrasting positions on the diagrammatic, with three principle aims in mind: 1. To indicate and diagnose the currency of the diagrammatic as a concept within aesthetics and in the analysis of artworks. 2. To place Deleuze within, whilst distinguishing him from, recent readings of the diagram within art history and visual culture, including those of Ernst Gombrich, WJT Mitchell, Benjamin Buchloh, Margaret Iversen and Frederich Stjernfelt, and in so doing exposing the way in which Deleuze's philosophy augments wider debates in the philosophy of

art. 3. To unpack and critically expand the role and status of the diagram within Deleuze's philosophy of art and indicate its implications for aesthetics and art history.

i. The Lure of the Diagram

'Diagram' - from the French *diagramme*, from the Latin *diagramma*, and from the Greek *diagramma*, meaning a 'geometric figure, that which is marked out by lines', (from (dia-) 'across' and (graphein) 'write, mark, draw') - is conventionally taken to designate a type of map or a schema that represents in simplified form a state of affairs. As 'an illustrative or geometric figure which […] gives an outline or general scheme of its object, so as to exhibit the shape and relations of its various parts'[1] functioning as a tool for grasping information more efficiently, a means of reasoning, or a pedagogical device, the diagram and diagrammatic thinking would appear to be utterly entwined in our day to day lives.

The diagrammatic also bears a rich intellectual history – not only as a subject, but as a method, and not only in the history of mathematics, where, from Euclid to Venn, it has played an obvious role as a geometrical figure, but across the broad sweep of the history of ideas. From Plato's use of a diagram to teach the Pythagorean Theorem to Nicholas de Cusa's metaphor experiments, from Villard de Honnecourt's figures to the schematic apparatus of Brunelleschi's linear perspective, from Alexander Kojeve's diagrams of the history of philosophy in his celebrated Lectures on Hegel to Henri Bergson's diagram of a cone, from Lacan's famous 'knots' to Lewis Carroll's squares, we do not need to look far to see the ubiquity of this fertile notion. The 19th century American philosopher CS Peirce described the appeal well, defining the diagram as a sign which, through the

[1] *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2001.

suppression of 'a great quantity of details', allows the mind 'more easily to think of the important features' and therefore to reason better.[2] For him, a diagram is the means by which 'any course of thought can be represented with exactitude', and this 'thought' is the rational and logical mode in which all men are able to participate.

Diagrammatic has been the subject of a growing intellectual interest over the last few decades, one that shows no sign of abating. Some, like Peirce, have seen the diagram as a mental representation. For others, it has served as a material tool. Since the 1980's, the continental-oriented humanities and the social sciences have witnessed a proliferation of new discourses on, and practices of, the diagrammatic with figures as apparently far-ranging in their work as the architect Peter Eisenman and the philosopher-mathematician Gilles Châtelet linked by their preoccupation with the concept.[3] The so-called 'spatial turn', the post-Heideggerian shift towards the notion of space as a descriptive, analytical and critical tool, was no doubt at the source of this interest. This move was in part fuelled by the critique of 19th century historicism in the wake of the apparent accentuation of the social, political and cultural 'significance of location'. It was further bolstered by a series of 20th century intellectual waves – the explosion of logic in analytical philosophy and its absorption into the continental

[2] James Hoopes (ed.) *Peirce on Signs*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 252 Thus 'operations upon diagrams, whether external or imaginary take the place of the experiments upon the real things that one performs in chemical and physical research for instance.'; they are thus representations of the relations between and within these "real things",

[3] On the shift 'from drawing to the diagram' within architectural practice over the second half of the 20th century, see R.E Somol in Peter Eisenman (ed.) *Diagram diaries (*London: Thames & Hudson, 1999) 7, 23.

humanities, 20th century phenomenology's foregrounding of visual experience and sensation, the figural thinking of gestalt theory, the interest in diagrams within semiotic theory (such as Greima's structuralist square, and Peirce's labyrinthine architectonic), the problematisation of writing and the graphic sign in the wake of Derrida's work (a field of inquiry within which the concept of the diagram, with its suggestive sense of 'across-writing' plays an intriguing role), and the theorisation of word/image relations within the study of cultural representations (Nelson Goodman, Roland Barthes, WJT Mitchell, Ernst Gombrich) – to name but a few.

Such intellectual shifts, given renewed significance by the 'spatial turn', have projected the diagrammatic, and its allied notions such as cartography, mapping, and even 'picture', into the foreground of the intellectual arena.[4] In the current age of global

[4] The seminal texts for the 'spatial turn' include Heidegger's 'The Age of the World Picture' in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 115-54; Henri Lefebre, *The Production of Space,* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), Gaston Bachelard *La Poétique de l'Espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958) and Michel Foucault "Des Espace Autres". *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5: October 1984: 46–49. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (NY: Hackett, 1976) was a key text in the formulation of 'picture theory'. WJT Mitchell describes the reorientation of modern thought around visual paradigms as 'the pictorial turn', a notion in part derived from Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995), 2, 9, 12. On the 'general politics of spatiality' in critical and theoretical work, which he characterises as the 'cartographic turn', see Bruno

networks, big data, and the technological circulation and proliferation of images, an age in which the fact of the hegemony of the visual seems indubitable, the primacy of the spatial as a means of making sense of man's experience has retained its potency. It is no surprise then that diagrammatics, a concept that traverses the major intellectual fields of the humanities, including semiotics, logic, linguistics, phenomenology, metaphysics, and aesthetics, continues to exert its fascination.

Predictably, given its apparent subscription to 'spatial' concepts that include, together with the diagrammatic the notions of 'cartography' and 'geo-philosophy', the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari has also been associated with this spatial turn.[5]

Bosteels, "From text to territory. Guattari's cartographies of the Unconscious" in *Deleuze and Guattari. New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy and Culture.* ed. by Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Hon Heller. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). See also the work of David Harvey, Sebastian Cobarrubias, John Pickles and Edward Soja - for whom the spatialisation of the postmodern era displaces 19th century historicism and linearised time "*Postmodern Geographies. The reassertion of space in critical social theory"*, in *The Spatial Turn*, 2. Warf and Arias point out how 'because so many lines of thought converge on the topic of spatiality, space is a vehicle for examining what it means to be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary', 1. John Mullarkey provides a good overview of the use of diagrams in 20th century continental philosophy in his Post-Continental Philosophy. An Outline, pp157-193

[5] Cf. the essays collected in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005). Throughout this essay, and unless otherwise specified, the nomination 'Deleuze' refers both to Deleuze's sole-authored work as well as his joint work with Guattari

Over the last few decades, Deleuze's concept of the diagram too has been the subject of growing interest.[6] However, this apparent timeliness is all the more reason for emphasising its *untimely* character, the way it – like all effective philosophical and critical concepts, according to Deleuze - resists identification with the present age as a tool for commentary or reflection upon it.[7] Indeed, Deleuze's position is to be distinguished from the appeal to the diagrammatic by recent theorists, such as WJT Mitchell, Edward Soja and John Pickles, where we find it being used to describe aspects of the 'contemporary' lived state of affairs – whether this be the hegemony of images and the 'pictorial turn' (Mitchell) or the spatial 'transformations of the contemporary world' through the 'flows of capital and goods, global immigration, tourism, and cyberspace and the internet' (Soja, Castells and Pickles). Such positions invest the diagrammatic as an agency for the representation of a contemporary lived situation, a means of rendering intelliglbe a complex state of affairs. But Deleuze's philosophy of the diagram departs from such a logic of intelligibility and representation. [8] For him, the crucial thing about

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[6] Cf. *Penser par le diagramme. De Gilles Deleuze a Gilles Chatelet* (PUV, Saint-Denis, 2004). Joachim Daniel Dupuis, *Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari et Gilles Châtelet : De l'expérience diagrammatique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012). Jacob Zbeduk, *Deleuze and the Diagram: Aesthetic Threads in Visual organisation* London: Bloomsbury, 2012; Eric Alliez "Diagram 3000 [Words]" *Documenta* (13) Hatje Cantz

[7] As Deleuze and Guattari elaborate in *What Is Philosophy?*, the philosophical concept is irreducible to its historical determination.

[8] Bender, John and Michael Marrinan understand diagrams as 'representations in general'. *The Culture of Diagram* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 19.

diagrams is their transformational character. To map a situation is not to show it more clearly, but to change it.

As such, the very notion of 'space' that is implicated by diagrammatics alters in Deleuze's account. If to map a situation is to bring a new situation into being, then space cannot simply be considered a homogeneous medium for the circulation of heterogeneous objects (pictures, images, flows, data, goods, etc.).[9] A diagram is not a mapping of things that can already be compared. Instead, Deleuze speaks of the diagram's distribution of 'spatio-temporal singularities' prior to the emergence of the spatial and temporal coordinates that define the successive positions and reference points of an object.[10] That is to say, diagrams are genetic – they bring new reality into being, and demarcate space and time through their operations. Insofar as it upholds this post-Bergsonian distancing from any foregrounding of space as the fundamental datum, privileged reality, or homogenous medium of expression, it would seem that Deleuze's diagrammatics does not sit comfortably within the 'spatial turn'. Rather, I argue that it is best understood in terms of Deleuze's philosophy of a 'transcendental empiricism', a philosophy that attends to difference as the regime of heterogeneous, pure,

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[9] Note Mitchell's conception of space as 'equally a matter of 'objective' relationships and subjective frameworks for cognition.' "Diagrammatology", *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Spring, 1981), 630

[10] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell, and Hugh Tomlinson (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 121.

constructive, spatio-temporal singularities.[11] It is in this light that I propose to read Deleuze's diagram, and assess its untimely implications at a remove from contemporary theoretical preoccupations, and its potentials for the analysis of artworks.

ii. Diagrammatic Art as Schematic Representation: Gombrich, Peirce, Kant

Many would in fact argue that the recent 'diagrammatic turn' is really no shift at all, since the appeal to diagrammatic devices to aid thinking is as ancient as man's awareness of his powers of reasoning. This appeal also characterises, many have argued, the process of artistic production. Artists too think diagrammatically, and perhaps have always done so.

This is the chief argument made by Ernst Gombrich in his seminal 1960 work, *Art and Illusion.* Like Peirce, Gombrich felt that the appeal to diagrammatic formulas, or 'schemas' (he uses the terms interchangeably) was a 'common human trait' that indicated 'the tendency of our minds to clarify and register an experience in terms of the known'.[12] For Gombrich this trait is given compelling expression in the artistic production of pictures. As such, pictures – which are for Gombrich not just Peirce's mental diagrams, but physical realities - reveal something fundamental about human processes of thinking and perception.

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[11] Henri Bergson, "The Idea of Duration" in *Key Writings*, ed. John Mullarkey (London, New York: Continuum, 2002), 59

[12] *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1962), 129, 147

Art and Illusion remains one of the most cogent defences of the claim that pictures in the Western tradition are representational. And it is Gombrich's nuancing of the question of representation as a schematic, or diagrammatic, act of artistic construction that is particularly notable.[13] Pictorial representation, he argues, is bound with the processes of representation inherent in man's perception, where perception is defined as the registration of sense experience 'in terms of the known'. Pictures are representational, that is, not in terms of their illusory fidelity to or imitative approximation to nature, and not in terms of the way things are directly 'seen'. Rather, they are representational with respect to their appeal to schemas, 'the basic geometric relationships which the artist must know for the construction of a plausible figure'[14]. On the basis of this theory Gombrich sets out the history of art as a history of schematism, narrating a fascinating chronology of the diagrammatic that takes in the pattern books, plans, scribbles and sketches of artists including Villard de Honnecourt, Durer, Leonardo, Rubens, Cozens and Constable. Through these case-studies, Gombrich demonstrates how artistic perception and the construction of style has always been a matter of registering and schematically synthesising what is given to the senses with what the artist already knows. Schematism is the condition of artistic representation.

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[13] The finer points of Gombrich's complex analysis into the nature of perception go beyond the remit of this paper.

[14] 126, 247.

The resonance here with Peirce's conception of the diagram is striking. Peirce defines the diagram as a schematic form of relations that can be 'experimentally' adjusted in an ongoing process of interpretation. When one makes experiments upon diagrams, 'one must keep a bright lookout for unintended and unexpected changes'.[15] Thus, the logical (also rationalist) method of thinking begins with a hypothesis, proceeds through the construction of a diagram, and further moves through the process of testing the diagrammatic presentation of fact with an observed reality. As such, diagrammatism is an ongoing and experimental process of construction (reality is logically constructed; it did not already exist), a process by which we attain 'laws' with increasing certainty, moving from particulars to generals through an ongoing testing against real (empirical) cases.[16]

For Gombrich too, the schema is the means by which an artist experimentally constructs, and continually 'corrects', his interpretation. It is the means by which the artist matches the schema he makes to the form it is to reproduce.[17] Artistic production must, he argues, have a 'starting point', a 'standard of comparison', and this 'hypothesis' is then submitted to a 'process of making and matching and remaking'.[18] The shape of an egg, for instance, may be taken as the schema for a head, the 'starting point for wrestling with the particular' givens of the sensible in order to construct a synthesised

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[15] Hoopes (ed.) *Peirce on Signs*, 250

[16] *Essential Peirce*, II, pp. 502, 303.

[17] Gombrich, *Art and Illusion,* 64

[18] Ibid, 272

interpretation (style). The artist can then apply this style to other drawn heads.[19] In this way, artistic construction departs from any notion of an unmediated relation to Nature, problematising the notion of 'direct observation'. Infact, construction assumes an autonomy that is in turn *confronted* to an observed Nature. As Peirce writes, in a similar vein, operations upon diagrams 'take the place of the experiments upon real things'; 'they are questions *put to Nature* of the relations concerned'. The artistic diagram (style) confronts Nature, and not the other way round.

Gombrich's analysis reveals the intertwining of the history of pictorial representation with the history of the idea of philosophical representation as mediating schematism. The notion that the work of art does not stand in a direct imitative relation to the real object but is rather the mediated product of a mental act corresponds, as David Summers has pointed out, to the long-established doctrine that 'the immediate object of knowledge is an idea in the mind distinct from the external object.'[20] It is this quasi-idealist notion of representation that Peirce too endorses when he writes that the diagram 'take the place of experiments upon real things'. At times, Peirce goes further, claiming that it does not matter that the Object of this thought may be a 'pure fiction',

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[19] Ibid.,148.

[20] Summers narrates the history of this idea from Plato and Aristotle to Galileo and Francis Bacon. He argues that the modern moment arrives with Bacon's distinction between the 'factual' interpretation of nature and the subjective 'anticipation of nature' that inaugurates representation as an act of mind . 'Representation' in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds, Richard Schiff and Robert Nelson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003)

since diagrammatics is chiefly concerned with forms that are logically possible rather than existentially real - the forms 'displayed before the mind's gaze' and 'which are the chief objects of rational insight.'[21]

In this, both Gombrich and Peirce reveal their debt to Immanuel Kant[22] who had famously argued that for objects of sense to coalesce in a representation, a synthetic act of mind is necessary. Representations of things are no longer believed to correspond to things in themselves; rather, objects in their appearances are understood to confirm to our *a priori* structures of representation. Kant calls this process of 'confirmation' – the synthesis of the intuitions of the sensible forms of appearance with the *a priori* concepts of the understanding – 'schematism'.[23]

Through the history of philosophical representation up to the modern moment that is given clarity by Kant, representation proceeds as a mediation of sensory data through

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[21] James Hoopes (ed.) *Peirce on Signs*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 252

[22] 'The Diagram remains in the field of perception or 'imagination' and so the Iconic Diagram and its initial Symbolic interpretant taken together constitute what we shall not too much wrench Kant's term in calling a schema, which is on the one side an object capable of being observed, while on the other side it is a general.' Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1931) 2.385, 5.531.

[23] *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) A138/B177. Kant refers to intuition, perception, sensation and cognition all as species of representation. A320

the synthesising structures of the mind. When Gombrich comments on the Renaissance artist's 'preoccupation with structure' - evidenced by his appeal to pattern and model books, and his discovery of perspective - as reflecting our (human) 'need for a schema with which to grasp the infinite variety of the world of change', he invokes this outlook.[24] What he calls a schema – the egg shape, for instance – arguably functions as the (empirical – for it is not a priori; Gombrich does not argue that artists are born with these innate concepts) equivalent of a Kantian *a priori* concept. The schematic egg shape grounds the various instances of observed heads given in sense experience, allowing the artist to register his/her experience in terms of the known. All heads, no matter how different to one another, can be traced back to the generic form of an egg.

Gombrich's neo-Kantian view of artistic representation as synthetic may be read as a response both to late 19th to mid-20th century developments in the psychologies of perception and to the actual contemporary developments of artistic practice of that period. For the view that art is an imitative or illusory representation of nature had of course been sharply called into question by the artistic revolutions of the late 19th to the first half of the 20th century. And it is from the perspective of this challenge that

[24] 133. Albeit with the important caveat that the artistic schema does not bear an *a priori* transcendental element. The egg schema for instance is not 'innate' and *a priori* to experience, but is a form derived from experience. Gombrich never clarifies this point, but it is assumed. Gombrich quotes Kant's definition of the schema at the opening of his chapter 2 of *Art and Illusion*, and also indicates his Kantianism in his Preface in a remark on how he has assumed a 'categorising' approach to perception. 23-24, 55

Gombrich rethinks the history of art. Whilst it is perhaps questionable whether art has ever been representational in a direct imitative way, in the wake of modernist and avant-garde innovations it becomes almost impossible to uphold this idea. The most innovative aspects of the works of Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, Klee, Kandinsky, eradicate illusionism through the exposure of artistic construction. In the afterlight of their breakthroughs, it was no longer tenable to hold, at least not without a great deal of qualification, that painting imitated or wished to resemble nature.

And yet, it *was* nevertheless possible to retain the view that art – and this is Gombirch's claim – that art remains representational. For firstly one could claim that artists, like all men, think in a representational way. Secondly, one could argue that artists are indebted to an inherited history of art. Whilst Gombrich acknowledges that artists of the late 18th century onwards 'struggled against the schema' and the 'bondage to universals', wishing instead to confront 'the unique visual experience which can ever have been prefigured and which can never recur' – he argues that schematic thinking persists firstly as it is a part of man's habitual way of experiencing the world, and secondly since no artist creates 'in a vacuum' outside the history of style - and the history of style is fundamentally a history of schematism. Pictures are representational since thinking is, conventionally, representational, and 'no artist is ever free from convention'.[25] As such, schematism is not only the means of the artist's representational relation to the real/Nature; it also acts as his representational relation to art history as the history of

[25] Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 246n

styles. For Gombrich a new work, however innovative, is forever grounded by the 'family of forms [the artist] has already seen', by the 'grip of conventions' and 'the power of traditions'. As he laconically remarks, 'art is born from art'. Even if he wishes to confront 'the unique experience that can never recur', 'the artist cannot start from scratch'; he can only 'criticise his forerunners', by adjusting the schemas he inherits from them. Thus Giotto, setting out to paint the human face, refers to the schema supplied to him by previous styles – in the work of his teacher Cimabue, for example – and tests this inherited pictorial schema against his own observation of a face, adjusting it as necessary. The results that Giotto presents us with reveal this process of experimental modification that nevertheless binds the 'new' elements of his practice to the continuous evolution of style.

Gombrich's view of the work of art as representational through its synthesis of sensory particulars with general frameworks (schema) is consistent with his theory of art history as a development of pictorial naturalism, continually augmenting previous artistic 'matchings' of style to new given realities. It is perhaps surprising, given the omniscience of the poststructuralist critique of representation, to encounter echoes of this neo-Kantian position in more recent appeals to the diagrammatic within art history and aesthetics. I will briefly survey four.

iii. The Persistence of Representation: Recent art theoretical and art historical appeals to the Diagrammatic

Recent work by WJT Mitchell and Freidrich Stjernfelt, Benjamin Buchloh and Margaret Iversen indicate the pertinence of the diagrammatic to contemporary analyses of artistic practice. On one level these can be grasped as art theoretical responses to the spatial turn. On other they may be taken to reveal the persistence of Gombrich's neo-Kantian idea of works of art as diagrammatic representations. Given the quotidian understanding of a diagram as a map with visual form, it is not surprising that the majority of these analyses foreground visual art. WJT Mitchell, pioneering theorist of image/text relations, is unusual in setting out the value of the diagram for literary theory.

In an important, but strangely neglected, 1981 article, Mitchell proposes a model of 'diagrammatology' for the analysis of literary form.[26] Works of literature are, he argues, composed of forms that mediate between the abstract and the concrete, the intellectual and the sensible, and the subjective and the objective. These forms are dynamic, shifting with the structure of the text and the act of reading. Mitchell argues that the only way to grasp or analyse these literary forms is through diagrams (which he also calls 'images') – schematic representations which allow us to apprehend the literary form through its outline and relations of parts. Building on his earlier claims on the importance of the interaction of verbal and pictorial modes of representation in cultural forms, the view that texts must always be treated as images, and that good literary analysis is sensitive to the images which bring literary form to light, Mitchell presents diagrammatology as a

[26] *"Diagrammatology"* 623. The paper is Mitchell's response to Leon Surrette's critique of Mitchell's earlier paper "Spatial form in Literature" *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring, 1980), 539-567.

way of attending to the visual nature of texts. Retaining the Peircian idea of the diagram, Mitchell thus defines diagrammatology as 'a systematic study of the way that relationship among [the formal] elements [of a work of literature] are represented.' In this way, diagrams connect the work of literature (and the writer) with the work of the theorist/analyst, binding together textual construction and the interpretation/analysis of that construction.[27] Mitchell's example is William Wordsworth's *Prelude*, a work that, he argues, invests many forms to convey its meaning. A description of the conflicting forces of memory and action are conveyed through the wavy shape of a river; the serpentine image evokes the meandering through different periods of time in the author's life, and the 'psychological dialectics' of beauty and fear, loss and recompense, progression and regression, activity and passivity. And, taken as a 'whole' the Prelude

[27] Ibid, 626. See also *Picture Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994, 4, 7. 'The concept of spatial form has unquestionably been central to modern criticism not only of literature but of the fine arts and of language and culture in general.' "Spatial form in literature", 539. For Mitchell, the diagram mediates between the sensible, 'concrete' image of a 'real thing' and the supersensible abstract realm of pure form'. For Mitchell, these formal elements can be transposed between , and taken from other traditions of imagery (reinforcing a claim running through Mitchell's work that "all media are mixed media", that there is no such thing as a pure visuality, and that representations are always hybrid) As such, diagrammatology – ostensibly Mitchell's version of a modernism against medium-specificity - encourages sensitivity to the 'points of conflict, influence and mediation' between texts and images, revealing the inherent spatial logic of a text, (and, it is implied, the inherent textual logic of images – although this reciprocity is not elaborated upon here

evokes the form of the architectural ruin, of 'an incomplete architectural structure in a natural landscape'. 'The image of ruins … is a picture of the achieved design of the Prelude.'[28] Mitchell also underscores Wordsworth's own reference to diagrams (in Book 7, Part II) as an antidote 'for a mind beset/With images'. And even when Wordsworth is seemingly at his most 'abstract' and metaphysical, gesturing to the pure and ideal beyond space, time and the senses, Mitchell argues that form in his poem is always intertwined with concrete, sensible reality. Diagrams exist at the point of this intertwining and diagrammatology is the process of attending to them and rendering them explicit.

In his compendious *Diagrammatology* (2007) Danish philosopher Friedrich Stjernfelt situates diagrammatics within picture theory. He broadly concurs with Mitchell's understanding of diagrammatics as the study of the way that relationships among [formal] elements of an object are represented and interpreted by graphic constructions.[29] He also retains the Peircian conception of the diagram as an icon that represents, through similarity, the 'internal structure' of objects in terms of its 'interrelated parts', in so doing facilitating 'reasoning possibilities' through a process of experimentation.[30] Thus Stjernfelt argues that 'the logical aspect of the picture is

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[28] "Diagrammatology", 631, 626,

[29] Stjernfelt states that Mitchell uses the word diagrammatology 'in a sense not wholly unlike my own' *Diagrammatology. An Investigation on the Borderlines of Phenomenology, Ontology and Semiotics.* (Netherlands: Springer, 2007) 425, n 3.

[30] Ibid, lx

inherent in its very iconic construction, in its very diagrammatical structure.'[31] Building on a text by the Danish art historian Eric Fischer, Stjernfelt conducts a diagrammatic analysis of an altarpiece of the *Last Supper* (1839-40) (Figure 1) in the Frederiksberg in Copenhagen by the Danish painter C.W. Eckerburg – an obscure artist who was apparently preoccupied by perspective, penning two treatises on the subject.

Squares predominate this painting. In a stark box-like room, the disciples are soberly seated around a cuboid table. The figure of Christ, strongly lit with red robes glowing, precisely marks the compositional centre. Above his head three square windows open onto a dark sky. The light does not come from this natural opening, but from an unseen overhead source that throws Christ, the white table surface, and an unoccupied square wooden stool into sharp illumination. Fisher claims that the *Last Supper* enlists mathematical categories - including the geometry of the golden section and two simultaneous perspectives - in an iconographic interpretation of the well-known passage from *The Book of John*.[32] The work gives expression to the painter's 'geometrical way of thinking'.

Eckerburg paints an empty stool, the apparent seat of a conspicuously absent Judas. Its lines of construction point to a second horizon lower than the horizon for the figural group of Christ and the disciples. In this way, geometry acts as the 'altarpieces'

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[31] Ibid, 285

[32] Erik Fisher, *C.W Eckersberg. His mind and times*. (Paris: Edition Bilingual, 1993), 11

iconographical messenger'; the geometrical construction of a second horizon conveys the message that the son of perdition has moved away from the harmony of men as one, and is lost.[33] Eckerburg's work is diagrammatic in representing, through its 'internal structure', the interrelated parts of its object. And it is the analysis of these spatial relations of the pictorial objects, and their similarity to the referent objects (in this case, the Biblical text) that Stjernfelt names 'diagrammatology'.[34] Thus, as it is for Mitchell too, diagrammatology pertains both to the diagrammatic logic of the work (its schematic representation of the painting's forms and their relations, figured in this case

[33] *Ibid*, 60, 67. This corresponds to the passage in the text: 'Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled.' *John* 17: 6-19.

[34] Stjernfelt also talks about the diagrammatic analysis of pictures in terms of a Peircian experimentation with the formal relations of a work in the experience of it close-up: on approaching the picture 'I measure distances on the picture plane and infer information about distances between foreground figures; I observe the relations of contrast; I imagine my body moving around in the pictorial space', and this 'wandering…has the characteristic of a diagram manipulation. … I make a manipulation where I imaginatively move around objects on the plane and observe the changes in their mutual relations. It is, in short, impossible to reflect or speculate upon a picture – in spontaneous perception or with the distance of the analyst – without conceiving of the picture as a diagram, manipulating with its parts according to different rules and, so doing, retrieve new knowledge of the objects depicted, be they concrete or abstract.' *Diagrammatology*, 279

through linear perspective), and to the process of extracting this logic. Unlike Mitchell however, Sternjfelt understands diagrammatology not just in terms of the schematic form of the work, but in terms of its iconographic character - the correspondence between form and content being guaranteed by the work's 'scientific rationality'. Whilst for Mitchell, Wordsworth's Prelude may suggest correlations between form and content, this correlation is by no means an exact science, and cannot be deduced methodically. In its iconographical precision, Eckerburg's altarpiece invites the diagrammatic analysis Stjernfelt outlines. But Sternjeft believes that 'all pictures are diagrams', even those made within the 20th century non-objective tradition, at apparently a far remove from iconographical rules. The works of Malevich, Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian, Newman, Rothko, Reinhardt all 'represent something', through a 'similarity' diagrammatically produced via relations – whether this be 'ideas or emotions', 'realms of ideal geometry', or even the 'that which-cannot-be-depicted'. In this way, Stjernfelt produces a theory of diagrammatics with application across the history of genres and styles. Both Gombrich and Mitchell had done the same.

But some art historians have associated diagrammatics with particular historical periods and particular artistic problematics. One example is the 20th century theorist and art historian Benjamin Buchloh. Investing Marcel Duchamp's *Network of Stoppages* (1914) (Figure 2) as a paradigmatic example, and describing it as the artist's 'first diagrammatic painting', Buchloh uses the category of the diagrammatic to designate a typology of drawing running through 20th century abstraction, including the work of artists such as

Francis Picabia, Frank Stella, Andy Warhol and Eva Hesse[35]. According to this typology, the work of art relies on (it *represents*, for Buchloh) an 'externally established matrix' – a 'readynade' or 'pre-existing formal or linguistic conventions', 'pre-given systems of spatio-temporal quantification' or 'statistical collection of data'. So for instance, Duchamp's *Network of Stoppages* is diagrammatic in its reliance on the artist's pre-existing works, which it superimposes in layers. The mechanical drawing consists of 3 sets of the Duchamp's earlier *The Standard Stoppages* (1913). Buchloh further points out how Duchamp presents a schema borrowed from the technical drawings of Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne Jules Marey,' in so doing announcing 'a graphic readymade'. Expelling 'subjectivity', and reducing drawing to a 'mimesis of mechanical, technical and commercial design', a schema of given information, Duchamp's diagrammatism 'represents' the contemporary age of 'techno-scientific rationality' and its features of

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[35] 'Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram' in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, ed Catherine de Zegher, Drawing Center (New York, N.Y.), Menil Collection (Houston, Tex.), Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, Calif.), Walker Art Center 2007. 52, n.1. also "Painting as Diagram. Five Notes on Frank Stella's Early Painting. 1958-1959", *October*, Winter 2013, No. 143, 126-144. 120, 129.
Buchloh's use of the diagram as a formal trope of 20th century artistic practice could be seen to function as a critical extension to the lexicon of index, grid, and the tableau developed by art critics such as Yves-Alain Bois, Rosalind Krauss and Briony Fer. Fer also considers the diagram as a trope of late 20th century art, focusing in particular on the work of Dan Flavin. *The Infinite Line*, (Yale, 2004), 65-85. Michael Golec refers to the presence of the diagrammatic and schematic in postwar US art, in his *Brillo Box archive.* Dartmouth College Press, 2008

quantification and mechanisation. For Buchloh the diagrammatic is not just about the schematisation of form – arguably all abstraction achieves this. Rather, it concerns the representation of given data, the incorporation of the readymade into the domain of abstraction, in turn supplying an alternative to hegemonic modernist discourses of abstraction, including that of the singularly expressive gesture. The banality of the diagram and its representational activity of a given field of data is utterly opposed to the paradigm of creativity, the inimitable and the 'new'

Drawing on Buchloh's categories, Margaret Iversen, in a 2012 article, defines the diagram as a 'hybrid representation' that combines abstraction from what is 'immediately given in perception' with the indexical, somewhat confusingly conflating semiotic categories conventionally kept distinct.[36] An earlier article written in 1985 sees Iversen applying the diagram more coherantly, characterising Masaccio's *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Figure 3) as 'a hierarchical diagrammatic representation of the figures represented.' Masaccio frames Christ on the Cross within a vaulted architectural niche, flanked by two ionic columns,. The figure of God stands on a ledge behind Christ, his arms touching the cross. Between the heads of God and Christ is the Holy Ghost, symbolised by the white dove with outstretched wings and head turned facing down towards Christ. For Iversen, this superimposition of Father, Son and Holy Ghost

[36] She finds this useful to describe contemporary works which she thinks do not easily fit into any extant semiotic category (such as Hesse's drawings on graph paper, Felix Gonzales-Torres's *Bloodworks* series and Amalia Pica's *Venn Diagram*) *Tate Papers*, 18, October 2012

is 'a diagrammatic expression of the Three-in-One. Hierarchical arrangement pervades representation.'[37] The pictorial diagram is the visual and representational schema of painted figures and the relations between them.

Notwithstanding their points of distinction and the differing problematics to which they are responding, these four examples reveal the tenacity of the commonsensical understanding of the diagram as a representational schema. Like Gombrich, all have moved away from a certain understanding of the work of art as an imitative representation of an externally existing nature. Like him too they remain concerned with the way works of art function as representations (and they all use the term 'representation' in their analyses) through their own schematising processes. Accompanying this representationalism is a formalist conception of the diagrammatic work. The diagram presents relations between forms, and these relations contribute to the work's 'internal' consistency as a coherent object with 'style' (Gombrich), 'internal structure' (Stjernfelt), 'achieved design' or 'spatial form' (Mitchell), the conventions of a formal readymade (Buchloh), or an internal 'hierarchy of figures' (Iversen). It is this formalistic rationale that in turn permits the work's situation in a historical lineage – the history of style as schematism (Gombrich), of spatial form (Mitchell) abstraction (Buchloh), or the conventions of perspective (Stjernfelt, Iversen).

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[37] Iversen "Saussure versus Peirce: Models for A Semiotics of Visual Art", in *The New Art History* ed. Al Rees. (London: Camden Press, 1986), 82, 94, 90

But what seems to be overlooked by such conceptions of the diagrammatic are the disruptions and deviations of art's material work from its adherence to formal schema. Whilst Gombrich notes the 'freedom of invention' within Villard de Honnecourt's diagrams, and the way Constable wrestles 'with the unique visual experience' – that element which cannot be schematically prefigured, he appears to see these moments as temporary disturbances to a rule of artistic production and a reality of human perception.[38] Similarly, whilst Stjernfelt notes that Eckerburg augments the tradition of one-point perspective with his own 'geometrical way of thinking', for him the painter nevertheless remains embedded within a continuous history of schematic thinking that connects him to Malevich and Kandinsky. Mitchell too claims to be interested 'not only in the synchronic study of individual works, but also the history of forms we call genres.' For these writers, the diagrammatic is a trope that binds artistic production – in all its innovations – to the established givens of art history. Buchloh sees it similarly: for him Hesse, Warhol, Picabia and Duchamp are linked to each other by an analogous appeal to 'pre-established schemas', and as such partake in a shared style. Here the diagrammatic is a trope that permits the art historian to draw a new lineage, a new set of analogies that levels out difference and deviation.

iv. ***Deleuze: Diagrams of Sensation.***

[38] Similarly, Summers raises the possibility of an alternative to a history of representation by embracing the construction 'implicit in the idea of formation', since 'the world is not simply projected from the mind' but 'is made…', but does not elaborate on how the work of art engages this. 'Representation', p15

Deleuze's conception of the diagram departs from the positions till now explored, precisely by affirming difference and deviation as the material for new reality. In contrast to the conception of the diagram as a representational schema with form, Deleuze conceptualises the diagram as the site of material and sensible disruptions to such a schema, as the capture of what Gombrich had called that 'unique' element of experience. For Deleuze, the diagram 'never functions to represent' but rather 'constructs a real yet to come'[39]. It has no form and substance of its own;[40] rather, it is purely operational. It is a map of sensation, matter and force, rather than of form.

Deleuze addresses the diagram in the context of painting (in his 1981 book *Francis Bacon. Logic of Sensation*), the context of linguistics and semiotic theories (in his 1980 *A Thousand Plateaus*) and in the context of an analysis of power (in his 1984 *Foucault*) . But regardless of the specific framework for analysis the basic claim remains the same: the diagram functions to destroy an existing state of affairs (whether those be linguistic

[39] *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (trans) Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 142. As such, Deleuze's concept of the diagram is irreducible to the actual diagrams that he draws throughout his works – from his diagrams of Leibniz's monadic house to the diagrams of machines in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

[40] Deleuze, Giles and Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 141-142. where matter 'is a substance that is unformed either physically or semiotically' and has 'only degrees of intensity', and 'function has only "traits," of content and of expression, between which it establishes a connection: it is no longer even possible to tell whether it is a particle or a sign.'

significations, over-coded 'regimes of signs'[41], pictorial forms, or images of thought) and construct a new reality (whether that be new sense, new figures of painting, new languages, new relations of power, or new thought). As a generative and transformative tool, the diagram plays a crucial role in what Deleuze calls a 'pragmatic' semiotics, that displaces the hegemony of fixed and self-sufficient and universal sign-regimes with the modelling of transformation and production. As such, diagrams do not privilege any specific type of sign regime – be it visual, linguistic, verbal or pictorial. Rather, the diagram is the genetic agent by which one regime of signs become something else.

In this way, Deleuze brings a particular slant to the diagram's etymological roots. He takes us beyond the graphic and visual associations of the diagram to focus on the productivity of the interval. It is what is *across* writing, something nebulous and as yet unformed, that constitutes the matter of the diagram. A dynamic outline, a process of mapping rather than a mapped product, diagrams do not fully resemble or represent anything, but are rather transitory signs, germs of order, possibilities of new facts whose lines traverse different, intertwined registers of experience – the social, the linguistic, the semiotic, the aesthetic, and the psychic. In this way Deleuze also distinguishes the diagrammatic from the Kantian schema. Whereas the schema synthesis two heterogeneous forms – the form of the concept with the form of the sensible as

[41] any specific formalisation of expression' ATP 111

appearance[42] – the diagram is a modulator that permits 'original interactions' of relations of forces across 'intensive continuums of matter'. Whereas the schema synthesizes a priori concepts that are 'too big' for the intuitions supplied by sensibility, the diagrammatic work of art replaces transcendental possibility with a constructive operation 'directly' in the real

Whilst Mitchell, Stjernfelt, Buchloh and Iversen all situated the diagram within specific regime of signs – the literary for Mitchell, the pictorial for Stjernfelt, and the visual for both Buchloh and Iversen, Deleuze conceives of the diagram as that agent which disrupts the apparent primacy or hegemony of any sign-regime. Thus the diagram is not just the capture of visual form beneath the literary text (Mitchell), the 'readymade' within the visual (Buchloh), or the visual schema within a pictorial composition (Iversen; Stjernfelt). Rather, it is the shaping of the 'amorphous continuum'[43] of particle-signs, the heterogeneous, plural, multidimensional and dynamic field of semiotic material that overspills the limits of signifying systems.

This conception of diagrammatics is posed as a full-blown critique of representation. We have seen how for Gombrich, and Peirce, diagrammatic synthesis involves 'already known' forms that provide 'standards of comparison'. Here, the creative component of production is inseparable from its historicity, and what is already established. But

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[42] 'Sensibility is the capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects. Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility.' Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A19/B33

[43] ATP 112

Deleuze dissociates the genetic element of the diagram from its conventionally referential character. He writes that in its construction of 'points of creativity' the diagram 'is always "prior" to history', where history is a regime that reassigns signification and 'standards of comparison' to creative diagrammatic acts.[44] Deleuze strongly opposes Gombrich's view of the artistic schema as a ground for practice and the means by which artists are bound to a linear history of style. His *Difference and Repetition* opens with the proposition to 'think difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same'. That is, difference must be thought 'in-itself', as the element of a 'dynamic construction', and Deleuze argues that works of art participate in this construction rather than in the preservation of analogies.[45]

When the work of art frees its construction of heads from references to egg-shaped schemas, when what is unrecognisable as an egg presents itself to us, we are shocked from a habitual stupor of thought - as recognition, as common sense - and we begin to think. Instead of referring the difference between an egg schema and a real observed head to the former – which leaves us with only an external difference, a difference exterior to terms - the work of art affirms the 'intensive' difference within the latter,

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[44] History is treated as a quasi-evaluative notion – the notion not just of the past but of the significant past – an established idea in the philosophy of history., cf William Dray The Philosophy of History (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, 1964) , 28

[45] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London, New York: Continuum), 29, 40-41, 144

that which is 'unique' in the experience of it. Thus we might end up with a chaotic and somewhat deviant head, but this is the possibility that Deleuze invites us to embrace. It is also a possibility that 'modern art' has realised.

Indeed, Bacon – himself painter of more than one deviant head - also describes his paintings as diagrammatic, of the process of casting 'involuntary' marks, surveying 'the thing like you would a sort of graph' (translated into French as *diagramme*), and the seeing 'within this graph the possibilities of all types of fact being planted'. 'I just wipe it all over with a rag or use a brush or rub it with something or anything or throw turpentine and paint and everything else onto the image … so that the image will grow, as it were, spontaneously and within its own structure, and not my structure.'[46] Thus Bacon's diagram is not a representational schema, or a transcription of a pre-existing external matrix or code. Rather it is (in Deleuze's words now) an 'immanent preparatory work' that functions 'directly in matter', an 'operative set of asignifying and non-representative traits' that do not partake in an established order of communication or system of interpretation – that is in any extant regime of signs.[47] The genesis of painting integrates the elimination of presuppositions, not referral back to the known. In *Head*, (fig.4) the diagram disorganises the lower half of the face, destroying, in the work's genesis, any resemblance to the perceived or idealised face. It is a 'veritable mess', which nevertheless

[46] David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon.* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, 93). Deleuze, *Francis Bacon. Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 1981), 160

[47] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 99; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 142

contains the seeds of 'possibilities of fact'. The new figure of a faceless head that emerges reveals its wry abandonment of any egg-like models. Any traits of resemblance to what we know a head to be emerges only through 'non-resembling means', through a modulation of relations that creates 'a sensible rather than a formal resemblance', an 'aesthetic analogy'. [48]

Bacon invests the diagram as a means of destroying all the clichés given to the artist by past experience and the traces of art history, the very traces that Gombrich believes supply the ongoing source of pictorial production. His paintings break with what artists have known and assumed about figuration, and what 'everyone is supposed to recognise' about figurative painting. Instead, the diagrammatic operation produces a head that defies representation, and which 'can only be sensed'. In the artist's own words, it 'unlocks areas of sensation' instead of simply illustrating the object; it acts directly on the nervous system and circumvents the 'long diatribe of the brain.'[49] Confronted by painting as a pure and intense 'bloc of sensation', or more precisely the passages of sensation, the synthesising exercise of the faculties that submits the sensible to the intelligible is foreclosed. Instead, sensibility 'finds itself before its own limit and raises itself to the level of a transcendent exercise', becoming the source of a thought engendered in its contact with real experience.[50] The diagrammatic work of art thus acts

[48] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 117

[49] David Sylvester*, Interviews,* 12, 18

[50] I*bid*, 144, 167

as the condition for what Deleuze calls 'transcendental' or superior empiricism - an exercise of the faculties under exceptional conditions[51].

The implications of Deleuze's conception of the diagram becomes clearer if we return it to the case-studies of Mitchell, Stjernfelt, Buchloh and Iversen.

From a Deleuzian perspective, the diagram of Wordsworth's poem would not consist - as it does for Mitchell - in its formal organization. Rather it would pertain to the way the material of language is used to capture the 'swaying' and 'turning' of 'the ravenous sea', the 'throwing' of 'the stormy waters', the 'yielding' of the traveler, and his 'lingering' at the mountain's summit. That is, in place of Mitchell's conception of the diagram as a schematic representation through which we can apprehend literary form, Deleuze's concept of the diagram permits us to attend to how the matter of language captures the forces constituting the affective dimension of the poetic experience that dislodges its communicative register. This is not a visual experience of writing – which merely converts one regime of signs into another. 'Storminess', 'ravenous' , 'swaying' , 'turning', 'yielding' and 'lingering' are not images – they are sensations. Infact they are passages of sensation, to which no specific form is adequate. Mitchell invites us to extract a work's formal diagrammatic structure in order to render it intelligible. But from a Deleuzian point of view, in the encounter with Wordsworth's diagram we are not simply interpreters representing to ourselves the decoded reality of the work's construction and

[51] Deleuze, *Dialogues II* translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (London, New York: Continuum, 2002), vii

its action upon us. Rather we are forced to experience the work in the sensory asignification and the intervals that are part of its genesis.

Using Deleuze's conception of the diagram, we might consider Eckersburg's *Last Supper* not in terms of how the formal composition of the work corresponds to its content, but rather with respect to how new relations in the material of the painting are conjured in the process of the work's genesis, relations that disrupt the possibility of the correspondence between formal composition and content.[52] Our attention returns to the three windows behind the head of Christ. Fisher noted the absence in Eckerburg's preparatory drawing of these windows, writing that they are 'only sketched in loosely as a kind of after-thought' and 'were not integral to the geometric whole.'[53] These windows –in themselves not particularly noteworthy, but which are not called for by the story - erupt within the process of painting, disrupting the prior plan, the iconographical correspondence of pictorial form to textual referent and the painter's 'geometrical way of thinking'. They sensitize us to a thread of the irrational and asignifying that runs through Eckerburg's oeuvre but which Stjernfelt, with his rationalist methodology, overlooks. In *Stormy Weather* (1845) a disjunct group of figures is affected by a storm that has no impact whatsoever on the nearby trees that one would expect to also be swaying violently. In *A Night Scene of Panic* (1836) figures on a moonlit bridge are gripped by an event beyond the picture frame. With such moments, the artist catastrophises, through the work of material, the logic of an apparently coherent pictorial rationality.

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[52] *A Thousand Plateaus,* 144-146

[53] Fisher, *Eckersberg*, 71

For Deleuze, it is such eruptions that characterize the work's diagrammatic function, producing new reality beyond what can be represented.

Such eruptions are to be found even in the most strictly organised compositions. Masaccio's *Trinity* is hailed for its practical realisation of Brunelleschi's new system of linear perspective, and the spatial organisation of the work – which apparently lends itself unproblematically to the analysis Iversen makes – seems resolute.[54] But even within such a coherent organisation, we encounter moments of unhinging. Other commentators have also noted them. Samuel Edgerton has remarked that the final composition is not simply the result of a transferred design, and was partly done freehand. The figures of Jesus and God the Father appear, he argues, 'as if from a slightly higher viewpoint than the fictive vault itself.'[55] There is also the famous thesis, first made by G. F. Kern in 1913, but often cited and developed within subsequent scholarship, that whilst Masaccio's projection of the architectural interior is mathematically correct, and indicates the use of an 'unambiguous ground plan', the figures fail to show the same mastery of perspective. The position of God the Father is irrational since His feet rest on a platform attached to the real wall of the chapel whilst

[54] Samuel Edgerton, *The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed Our Vision of the Universe* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 77, 85.

[55] Edgerton, *The Mirror*, 80, 85, 86.

His hands support the arms of the cross on the same plane as Mary and John.[56] Thus, as Bruce Cole has pointed out, the work 'is not the model of rationality and clarity it appears to be on first sight', and in fact raises many questions – concerning not only the positioning of God but also the exact size and proportions of the fictive room, and the source of light in the picture. The work is an example of 'enigmatic composing', and a survey of it simply 'ends in confusion'.[57]

Into the apparent tribute to the new Renaissance values of rationality and the systematic geometrical ordering of space is injected an element that renders the mystery of the Trinity a pictorial mystery. It is this eruption of the enigmatic as a challenge to representational clarity, and the disruption of prior formal organisation with asignifying material slippages occurring during the work's process that opens the way for a Deleuzian problematisation of art's work. Clearly, Masaccio's catastrophe does not resemble Bacon's. We do not have here a chaotic eruption of chance marks on the painting surface or a preparatory work fully immanent to the painting process. Masaccio still utilises a plan made in advance. Rather we encounter Masaccio's diagram (in the Deleuizian sense) in the alteration to the projection of a prior Brunelleschian plan during the work's process, an immanent transformation that liberates 'new relations' not

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[56] H.W. Janson 'Ground Plan and Elevation in Masaccio's Trinity Fresco' in *Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower* (New York, Phaidon, 1967), 83

[57] Bruce Cole, *Masaccio and the Art of the Early Renaissance* (Indiana University Press, 1980), 178-181

originally present in the plan, which do not correspond to the projected form or depicted content of the work, and which in turn generates the feeling of a pictorial 'life' arguably more intense than the lived perception grounding pictorial 'naturalism'.[58]

The very thing that constitutes diagrammaticity for Buchloh – the externally established matrix, or code - is for Deleuze its antithesis. In *Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze opposes Bacon's diagrammatic to the 'digital' coding of geometric abstraction as exemplified by Kandinsky and Auguste Herbin, a coding that draws on the 'externally established schemas' of a 'pictorial alphabet' (in Herbin's case), or symbolic system (in Kandinsky's) – and which merely reinstates representation by the back door.[59] For Buchloh such coding constitutes art's reflection of its contemporary lived reality, its self-presentation in the mechanized forms that reflect the data and codes of an information age. It is hard not to read a tone of resignation, if not pessimism, in this classification of the artwork as reflective both of its technological context, and of an internal history of artforms (here, a 20th century lineage of abstraction). There is no doubt that Deleuze assumes an affirmatory position – where the work retains an 'aesthetic' distinction from the socio-historical circumstances of its age, and it is this sensory distinction from empirical givens that constitutes its experiential impact.

iii. Concluding Remarks

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[58] *What Is Philosophy?*, 171

[59] *Francis Bacon*, 103-104

Borne on the waves of intellectual trends, concepts can find themselves entangled within points of view that may run counter to their most radical reaches. The diagram is one such concept. Brought ashore in recent decades by the trend known as the 'spatial turn', it has generated interest with all the urgency characteristic of the igniting of a trend. But Deleuze's conception of the diagram deviates from the common, and historically established, understanding of the diagrammatic sustained by recent commentators – that of the diagram as a schema, a simplified representation of a state of affairs, which facilitates the thinking process through the visual generalisation it permits.

I have attempted to sketch a few moments within the history of this idea, an idea that has interwoven notions of artistic representation to philosophical representation as a process of schematism. The work of Ernst Gombrich is I feel still a key point of reference to any such sketch. His voice remains one of the clearest and most compelling articulations of how art as diagrammatic partakes in a logic of representation. Although he makes no explicit mention of the American philosopher, Gombrich brings the work of CS Peirce, who was the first to give a specific philosophical clarification to the notion of the diagrammatic as a schema by which thought represents to itself its processes, to the question of art's work and art historical study. The analogy between their positions reveals a conception of art's work as a representational mode of thinking, an outlook one of the sources of which is Kant, who in his conception of schematism formalised the image of thought as representation.

Gombrich historicises schematism. In consequence the problem of representation is presented not simply as involving the work's relation to an 'external' state of affairs ('nature') but also the work's relation to its own history. This history is above all a history of thought. Gombrich presents us with a conception of the history of style as a history of schematic thought. Style, as artistic tradition, assumes the traditions, or habits, of thinking representationally. This binding between the image of thought as representation and the work's historicising of its processes is implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) reiterated in the readings of diagrammatism by Mitchell, Stjernfelt, Buchloh and Iversen. Thus it is not only the question of 'formalism', and a reassessment of its legacy that is at issue, but of formalism's historicity, that is raised. But clearly this requires critical reflection.

Why should it be the case that what art history foregrounds is the commonality between disparate works, and the way they can be commonly identified in terms of an operation of schematic representation of the artist's process of thinking? Deleuze invites us to confront the work of art's assertion of its difference beyond its debt to inherited (art) history and an established image of thinking. Through his concept of the diagram, artistic genesis is newly conceived in terms of a differential construction of matter, a process of thought that shocks thought's representational image through the violence of sensation, and which in turn displaces an allegiance to art history based on identity, opposition, resemblance or analogy – the type of allegiance presented to us by the continuous history of styles. As a 'map of sensation', Deleuze's diagram offers a new concept for aesthetics and art history.

NOTES